



PRESS RELEASE

U.S. ARMY CHEMICAL MATERIALS AGENCY

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Army Begins Operations at ABCDF Ton Container Cleanout Facility

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. — On Friday, Jan. 7, workers at the Aberdeen Chemical Agent Disposal Facility (ABCDF) began operation of a pilot facility designed to clean, decontaminate, and cut in half steel containers that have had their mustard agent drained and destroyed.

Startup of the Ton Container Cleanout Facility, or TCC, marks the second phase of a plan to safely and quickly destroy the mustard agent stockpile located at the Edgewood Area of the Aberdeen Proving Ground by first draining and neutralizing the agent stored in steel containers, then thoroughly cleaning the containers.

The TCC uses high temperature water sprayed at high pressure to remove residual solids from drained containers. The automated system then cuts the containers in half for additional cleaning and eventual recycling as a non-hazardous waste.

Describing the one-of-a-kind facility, ABCDF Site Project Manager Joseph Lovrich said, "The facility is truly state-of-the-art, but as with any first-of-a-kind initiative, we expect to face operational challenges along the way." Lovrich added, "The lessons we learn will be shared with other chemical weapons disposal sites across the nation."

The TCC is a sealed facility consisting of 11 stations through which containers move on conveyors. One station punches holes in the containers, another sprays the containers with hot water to dislodge hardened material. The rinse water is then pumped from the container and is neutralized. At another station, a robotic arm removes each container's valves and plugs. A remotely operated cutting machine cuts the container in half at yet another station. The two halves are pressure washed with hot water inside and out. The container halves then are steamed and dried to complete decontamination.

Workers monitor every ton container at the end of the process line to ensure that each container has been cleaned and decontaminated. Any containers not fully decontaminated go through the cleaning and decontamination station again for further processing.

The facility uses a large air handling system that filters any potentially contaminated air through a bank of carbon filters throughout the entire process. Initially, the facility will operate under limited conditions and slowly ramp up the destruction rate.



For more information,
contact the
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Stockpile Outreach Office

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www.cma.army.mil



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Since beginning disposal operations in April 2003, workers at the ABCDF have safely neutralized 80 percent of the Aberdeen mustard agent stockpile. More information about storage and disposal operations at ABCDF is available at the U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency's Web site at <http://www.cma.army.mil>.

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The U.S. Army Chemical Materials Agency is responsible for safely storing and eliminating the United States' aging chemical weapons and agent stockpiles and for the safe elimination of recovered chemical materiel.



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